

It's Raining Cats and Waffles by JoMo3

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Summary:

Eleven had a weird relationship with rain.

On one hand, it scared her. The flashes of lightning frightened her, and the claps of thunder made her shake. And getting wet wasn't necessarily one of her favorite things; it made her think too much about the "baths" she had to take in the lab. But probably the best thing that rain brought-for El, at least-was the beginning of her new life. It had been raining, after all, when she ran into the first (and best) friends she'd ever had. It had been raining when a certain freckled boy saw how frightened and alone she was, and had given her his jacket as well as a home.

A rainy day brings out feelings for Mike and El.

It's Raining Cats and Waffles

Author's Note:

Mileven Week theme: "In the rain"

Eleven had a weird relationship with rain.

On one hand, it scared her. The flashes of lightning frightened her, and the claps of thunder made her shake. And getting wet wasn't necessarily one of her favorite things; it made her think too much about the "baths" she had to take in the lab. She remembers that first night in Mike's basement, when she tried to sleep in the fort, how the storm outside seemed to amplify the fear she already felt. She hadn't known where she was, how long, or *if* she'd be safe. One of her earliest memories was the fear of rain and storms.

But rain, of course, also brought good things.

As she learned more about the world, she learned that rain helps things grow. Joyce had taught her the phrase "April showers bring May flowers." Which she still didn't really understand, especially since it'd rained only once last April.

But probably the best thing that rain brought-for El, at least-was the beginning of her new life. It had been raining, after all, when she had ran into the first (and best) friends she'd ever had. It had been raining when a certain freckled boy saw how frightened and alone she was, and had given her his jacket as well as a home. And for that reason alone, she had (mostly) gotten over her fear of rain, and of storms.

But sometimes rain just *sucked* . And today was one of those days.

A few weeks earlier

"I want a dog."

Eleven stood in the cabin, a look of determination on her face, as she awaited Hopper's reaction.

Hopper, sitting on the couch, glanced over the top of his newspaper at her. "You do, do you?"

"Yes."

"And why's that?"

"Because...." she racked her brain, trying to come up with a good enough answer; she hadn't thought this far ahead. "Because they're cute," she answered.

Hopper chortled. "Yeah, and so's Bo Derek, but you don't hear me asking for one."

Eleven scrunched her eyebrows in confusion. "What's a Bo Derek?"

"Nothing," Hopper responded, turning the page. "Why do you want a dog all of a sudden?"

Now *this* she had an answer to. "Because it gets lonely sometimes, here. By myself. All day. And it would be nice."

Hopper sighed, not wanting to admit she had a point. Her year of re-hiding was *almost* up-it was the end of May, now-and though he had loosened the reins some on her staying hidden, there were still precautions. One of which (and the one they still argued about) was that she could only leave or have people over twice a week-three, if he was feeling generous. He knew the days had to be lonely for her. Still...

"Dogs require a lot of care."

"I know."

He put the paper down. "Do you? You've got to feed it, walk it, and clean after it. You've got to keep it entertained."

She rolled her eyes. "I know what 'care' means."

"Don't get smart with me, kid," he warned. "And why do you want a dog all of a sudden, anyway?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know."

"Hm." Raising the paper up, he figured it had to be one of her friends. Probably a certain freckled boy she spent all her time obsessing over. "Dogs are noisy, too. They draw attention."

"This one won't."

Paper down again. "Which one won't?"

"If we get one. I'll keep him quiet. I promise."

"El," he said, shaking his head. "I don't see how there's a way it works."

"*Please ?*" she begged.

Hopper sighed. "I'll think about it."

"Okay," she said, smiling.

"Wipe that smile off your face, I didn't say yes," he called after her as she ran to her bedroom.

Eventually, of course, Hop came around, and two weeks later El was over the moon when he brought home a chocolate labrador puppy.

"Thank you thank you thank you," she said, hugging him tight then carefully taking the puppy into her arms.

"I'm not feeding it or walking it, you got that?"

"Yes," she said, as the puppy licked her face.

"And you only walk it outside when *I'm* here, understand?"

"Yes," she said, smiling from ear to ear.

"And if I think it's too noisy, or if I'm stepping over dog crap, it's gone, okay?"

“Okay,” she nodded, sitting on the floor as the puppy climbed over her.

Despite his harsh tone, Hopper smiled at seeing El so happy.

“So what’re you going to name him?”

It was the day after Hop had brought the puppy home, and El’s friends were over to see the new member of the family.

Mike, who’d asked the question, sat on El’s bed next to Lucas, as the others—El, Will, Dustin, and Max—sat in a circle around the puppy, as he playfully went from one to the other.

“I don’t know,” she answered, scratching behind the puppy’s ears.

“You could call him Brownie,” Max suggested as the pup wiggled out of El’s arms and went to Will.

“Maybe...” El had gone through a list of names in the past day: from simple (Rover) to sentimental (Benny). She’d even thought about naming it Mike, but Hopper had said “no way” were they going to name the dog after her boyfriend.

The puppy, done licking Will’s cheek, scrambled back into El’s arms where she cradled it close to her.

“Jeez, El,” Dustin commented. “You love that thing almost as much you love waffles.”

El smiled. “Waffle.”

“What?” Max asked, reaching for the dog.

“Waffle,” El repeated. “I could name him Waffle.”

“That is probably, like the coolest name ever for a dog,” Lucas said.

The group agreed, and the puppy was given the affectionate name of Waffle.

Over the next week, Eleven never let Waffle out of her sight. When Joyce came to tutor her, the dog was in El's lap. When El watched her soap operas, Waffle's head rested on El's leg as he dozed. El tried to have him sleep with her, but Hopper shut that down right away.

In fact, Eleven and Waffle spent so much time bonding that Mike was feeling...left out. El still came to see him once a week, and he went up to see her; but when she was at his house all she could talk about was puppies. When he was at *her* house, all of her attention was on Waffle. Mike was beginning to feel jealous.

And he *hated* that he was jealous of a dog, he really was, but he couldn't help it. The way El looked at Waffle was, well...kind of like the way she looked at *Mike*. And he knew that the dog was to keep her company; heck, if he had to stay locked up in that cabin as much as she had to, he'd be begging for a pet, too. But he couldn't help but feel envious when she came over, and while they watched TV together, she doodled little pictures of puppies in a notebook. Or, when he went to see her two days later, how she didn't give him the usual "good to see you kiss" because she was holding Waffle in her arms. And he *really* felt envious when they sat on the couch together, and the dog kept squirming between them, before nestling between the two teens with his head on El's lap.

"He loves sleeping on my leg," El noted, scratching Waffle's head.

"Yeah, I noticed," Mike grumbled.

"Is something wrong?"

"No."

She didn't necessarily look like she believed him, but she kept quiet.

Mike came over again the following Friday evening. All day the sky had looked like it was going to rain, and by the time Mike arrived at the cabin, a light shower had begun to fall. It was just Mike today, as their friends were occupied with other things. After his last visit had

been dominated (or, as Dustin called it, dog-inated) by Waffle, Mike wanted a chance to have time with just he and El.

Hopper was out, too, and usually he didn't want anyone (especially Mike) over when he was away. But he'd already promised El that Mike could come over.

The two began on the couch, watching some TV show that El had come to like. Around the first commercial, the rain had begun to really fall.

When there was a rumble of thunder, Mike saw El wince.

"Hey," he asked, taking her hand. "You okay?"

"Yes," she said, nodding. "Sometimes it frightens me, though." She looked over to Waffle, who lay on the floor, next to the couch. "It frightens him, too."

"Hm." Letting go of El's hand, Mike stood up. "Is it okay if I bring my bike in? Or put it on the porch, at least?"

She nodded, and the two got up. El watched as Mike quickly opened the door, dashed outside, and ran his bike up the steps. He brought it inside and stood it next to the small table.

"Thanks," he said. Glancing at the still open door, he said "Close it, before Waffle gets out."

El's eyes widened, and she jerked her head, closing the door.

They went back to the couch, and Mike took El's hand as they got back into the show. A few moments into it, El let out a soft giggle as Waffle licked her free hand.

"You should get a dog," she said to Mike.

"Why?"

"Because then they could play together," she said.

Mike shook his head. "We had one, when I was little."

“You never told me that.”

He nodded. “Her name was Toto.”

El laughed. “Like in the story.”

“Yeah. It was Nancy’s, but my parents did most of the walking and stuff.”

“What happened to her?”

“Huh?”

“Why don’t you still have her?”

“Oh. Um...Nancy couldn’t take care of it anymore, so my parents gave it away.”

“Oh.” El stooped down and picked up her dog. “Hopper says I’m taking good care of Waffle.”

“You are,” Mike admitted.

“Do you want to hold him?” El asked.

“Uh, no. That’s okay.”

El shrugged, and put the puppy back onto the floor, where it scurried off. Looking over at her, Mike chuckled. “What?” she asked.

“You’ve, uh...got some dog hair on you.”

“Oh.” She looked on her shoulders, but didn’t see any.

“No, it’s right...here,” Mike said, reaching over at taking it off her cheek.

“Oh. Thanks,” she said.

Mike’s face was right next to hers, and as he flicked the hair off his hand, he couldn’t help himself and leaned over and kissed her other cheek.

El giggled, and brought her hands to Mike's face, pulling him closer as she kissed him back. They kissed for a minute, before Waffle jumped on the couch, jumping into El's lap. Laughing, she pulled away from Mike, as Mike tried so, so, hard not to roll his eyes.

"Do you think..." she began, but there was another clap of thunder, startling her. Waffle let out a yelp, and jumped from her hands and disappeared.

"Are you okay?" Mike asked.

El nodded. "Yes. I just..." She looked behind her. "Where's Waffle?"

Mike turned, too, and saw the front door ajar; not enough that he or El could squeeze through, but definitely big enough for a small dog to get through. "Um...El?"

She saw it too, and jumped up from the couch and rushed to the door. Pulling it open, she called "Waffle? Waffle?"

Mike jumped up, and looked in the bathroom, and under El and Hopper's bed. No sign of the dog. "El," he said, seeing the worried look in her eyes. "I think he..."

Before he finished, Eleven grabbed a flashlight Hopper kept by the door, threw on a jacket, and was out the door.

Present Moment

Mike was right behind her, after he'd found a raincoat that had to have been Hopper's. Despite his growth spurt, the coat was way too big for Mike.

Still, he closed the door behind him and stumbled into the rain, right behind El. "Wait up!" he cried.

She kept going, stepping over the tripwire. "Waffle!" she called. "Waffle!"

“Here, boy,” Mike said, finally catching up. Turning to El, he said “He couldn’t have gone far, it just...”

But before the sentence was done, she marched on, calling the dog’s name. Mike huffed, and followed her.

“Waffle!” El called, shining the light around her.

“Waffle!” Mike called as well. Trying again, he said “El, he’s got to be close to the cabin, he can’t...”

“Waffle!” she said, interrupting him and walking ahead.

Mike caught up, and stopped her. “ *El* . We need to work together, and we can find him, alright?”

She nodded, her hooded head bobbing up and down. She had a look in her eyes Mike couldn’t place. Anger? Worry?

They walked on, with El shining the light all around them, when Mike wondered aloud “How’d he even get out, anyway? I thought the door was closed.”

“I didn’t close it all the way,” she muttered.

“What?”

“I didn’t close the door all the way,” she said. “I *thought* I did, but I must have left it open a little.” She shook her head. “If Hopper finds out, I’m...”

“He won’t find out,” Mike said. “We’re going to find him, El.” He glanced up at the sky. “I just wish it wasn’t raining.”

“Then go back,” El muttered as she walked around him.

“Wait, what? Why’re you mad at me for?”

Ignoring his question, she called “Waffle!” into the dark.

“I’m just trying to help,” Mike mumbled. Then, under his breath, said “I wasn’t the one who left the door open.”

Apparently, though, he didn't say it quiet enough, because a second later the flashlight was in his face as El glared at him.

"Sorry," he squeaked.

"Just...go back," she said.

"El, I'm sorry, I didn't mean it," he told her.

"Why are you even out here?" she asked, angrily. Mike took a step back as she walked closer. "You don't even *like* Waffle."

"Yes I do! I just..."

"You what?"

He sighed, not wanting to admit how he felt. But Hopper's jacket wasn't as protective from the rain as he would've liked it to be, and El didn't look like she was moving until she got an answer.

"I just...." he began, "I got jealous, okay?"

She took a step back, confused. "What?"

"Ever since you got Waffle, it's like you...I don't know...like him better than me."

She blinked, but didn't say anything.

"And I know it's silly to be jealous of a dog. But I'm glad you got him, El, I really am. It's just my own insecurity, and I've got to get over it. But I'm sorry."

She still didn't say anything, but Mike could tell she was thinking. Finally, she spoke. "You were jealous?"

"Y...yeah."

She took a step closer. "He's a dog, Mike."

"I know, I know."

"And I love him. He makes me happy."

“I know, I just...”

“But that doesn’t mean I love you any less.”

That got him to stop talking. After a moment, he asked “You love me?” They hadn’t said it to each other yet; he didn’t know if she knew what it meant.

“Yes,” she said, nodding her head. Stepping closer, she continued with “Waffle makes me happy. But not as happy as *you* make me.”

Mike smiled. Despite how cold he was getting from the rain, he felt a surge of warmth envelop his body. “I love you too, El.”

She smiled shyly. Mike stepped closer; taking her face in his hands, he brought her close for a tender kiss that she was more than happy to return. “I’m sorry for being a mouth-breather,” he told her.

She laughed, and rubbed one of the hands holding her face. “It’s okay.”

He kissed her once more, then, hand in hand, they turned to keep looking.

They’d only taken a few steps when Eleven stopped. “Do you hear that?”

“Hear what?” A second later Mike heard it, too; a rustling in the leaves. “Waffle?” he called.

There was more rustling, then a small, brown blur burst out of the surrounding woods and into El’s arms as she bent down. “Waffle!” she cried, hugging the shivering and shaking dog to her. “I’m so glad you’re back.”

Mike pet the dog’s back. “Let’s get him home.”

They trekked back to the cabin, and El put some wood into the fireplace to warm them up quickly. She and Mike sat in front of it, with Eleven huddling Waffle close. Despite the fire, the two kids were

still shivering, so Mike got a blanket and put it around them. Eleven already had her dog bundled up, but the dog poked its head out, licking Mike's hand and causing him to chuckle.

"He likes you," El said.

"Yeah, I guess he's not too bad," Mike said, causing El to smile and playfully bump Mike with her shoulder. "Are you going to tell Hopper about this?" he asked.

She shook her head. "He should be dry by the time Hop gets home. There's no reason to."

Mike sighed, as El put her head on his shoulder. Wrapping an arm around her, he said "I have to leave soon."

"It's still raining," she said. "At least wait until Hopper comes back. He can take you."

Mike nodded. "Well, if you're pulling my arm..." She breathed a laugh.

They sat for a moment, letting themselves warm up. Mike eventually looked down at the girl in his arms. "I love you, El."

She looked up and smiled. "I love you too, Mike." They leaned close and shared another kiss.

When they pulled away, Eleven sat up and handed Waffle to Mike. "Here."

"Uh...what?"

"I'm going to make some hot chocolate," she said. "Do you want some?"

"Yes," Mike said, looking down at the dog. As he heard El opening drawers and moving in the kitchen, Mike looked down at Waffle, whose eyes were closed, and smiled. A few hours ago, he thought this dog might put a wedge between he and El. Now, he felt closer to her than he ever did. "Maybe you're not so bad after all," Mike whispered to Waffle.

Both Mike and El ended up being sick after all that time in the rain, but they didn't really care. Eleven *really* got over her fear of rain and storms after that night; now, whenever it rained, it brought to mind memories of kissing the love of her life in the rain. And that was a memory she wouldn't trade for anything.

Author's Note:

So this was the last in my Mileven Week series. Hopefully the time hop didn't confuse you? If it did, let me know and I'll do my best to explain. The "present moment" section is where her feelings on rain would go. Thanks for reading, and I always love comments.